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THE METHODIST MAN'S BURDEN

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TO THE LAYMEN OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THIS BOOKLET IS PRAYERFULLY
DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR

I

WHY WEIGH IT?

THE General Committee of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church is in session in an Atlantic seaboard city. The usual routine has been finished, and all are impatient for adjournment.

A layman, who is a large manufacturer of goods for foreign markets, secures the floor:

"Mr. Chairman, for a good many years it has been a part of my business to investigate conditions in foreign countries with a view to building up trade. The company with which I am connected has expended many thousands of dollars to get accurate information concerning foreign situations. Every such dollar spent has brought large returns. I believe that one reason why men of the church are failing to respond to our appeals is that we have no program to offer them based upon careful and systematic investigation. I have never yet heard any authentic statement as to the size of the task we as a church have undertaken in the foreign mission fields and what would be a reasonable estimate of the men and money required to meet the needs of these various fields. I therefore offer the following:

"*Resolved*, That a Commission of Seven be appointed for the purpose of investigating:

"1. For what portion of the unevangelized sections of the world's population may we consider ourselves responsible in the various mission fields?

"2. What will be a probable minimum re-

quirement in missionaries and money to meet this responsibility during the first half of the twentieth century?"

The proposition seems so reasonable that it is about to be adopted without debate, when an apostolic man of ripe and varied experience, to whom all listen with deserved reverence, obtains the floor:

"The problem of the evangelization of the Christless nations is too complicated, and shifts too much from year to year, for any group of experts on earth to make a reliable estimate of its cost. We are dealing with spiritual forces, and these intangible entities are the most subtle, as well as the most powerful, in the universe. How God will bring about the spiritual birth of a nation in a day we have no means of estimating. Unforeseen political and social events may greatly hinder the work in certain fields, while upon the other hand, when his 'Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh,' our little arithmetic will be set at naught, and our feeble faith rebuked by victories undreamed of in our moments of most exalted optimism. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel. 'Not by an host, . . . but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah.'"

There seems no hope for the resolution after such influential, and apparently reasonable, opposition; but before the motion for tabling can be made, the mover of the resolution claims his right to close the debate:

"Mr. Chairman, the great truths which we have just heard must be admitted by all of us here whose creed declares 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' However, these are but half-truths. I am no theologian, but the apostle Paul was, and he speaks distinctly of 'the law of the

Spirit.' If we can only get at the working principles of that 'law,' I see no good reason why we may not reach approximately accurate conclusions regarding results.

"When a promoter comes to persuade me to take stock in a distant gold mine or business enterprise in a foreign land, if he tells me that he has no idea how much investment will be required before dividends may be expected, or what the rate of the dividends, I set him down as an adventurer or a fool. I may give him a dollar to get rid of him, but I buy no stock.

"Now, I believe that it is this absence of a credible prospectus that is a powerful factor in keeping the average Methodist man from taking stock in the foreign mission enterprise. He gives a dollar to get rid of the solicitor. It seems to him too much like putting his money into a hole. Nor will he invest until we take the matter out of the air and give a concrete scheme that inspires confidence that we are not visionaries.

"No sensible man will insist upon a hard-and-fast estimate that, like the laws of Calculus, cannot be changed. New elements will arise and new knowledge will be gained. But we have been in this foreign mission business now for three quarters of a century, and we have experts in every field. We ought to be able to tell approximately what we could do if we had more to do with. It may be that our estimates will have to be revised over and over again, as the Panama Canal engineers had to revise their first figures. New ideals of the scope of mission work may make it necessary to broaden and deepen the highway of the nations journeying to the City of God. Even so may it be! As

was done with the Panama calculations, the revised estimates will be scrutinized, but not repudiated; and the new budget, if there be one, will be an outgrowth of the old. It will be, in my judgment, wholly impossible to secure the respectful attention, much less the hearty coöperation, of the average Methodist business man in this great work of world regeneration so long as our budget is a vague 'All we can squeeze out of you.' "

There are cries of "Question!" and the motion prevails without division.

II

THE BREAKFAST CONFERENCE

IT is a bright Sunday morning in June. Three missionaries of the Foochow and Hinghwa Conferences are gathered around the breakfast table in the residence of the president of the Anglo-Chinese College at Foochow, China. They are discussing the problems of the Kingdom. The Commission of Seven has sent out its carefully drawn up questionnaire, and the possible answers are a subject of absorbing interest.

The problem of population is not an easy one in China, where no accurate census has ever been taken. Approximate estimates by the government are quoted and the careful observations of years utilized. Each civil district or prefecture is gone over. Other societies working in the same region are allowed their due proportion, and the total—"What? Seven and one half millions! These one hundred missionaries and five hundred Chinese preachers of all grades expected to evangelize a population half as numerous as the whole numerical responsibility in America of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with its one hundred and twenty-seven Conferences and Missions, its fourteen thousand effective ministers, and three and a quarter million members!"

The silence is broken with, "How many missionaries will be needed?"

"The last Central Conference of China, which carefully considered this problem, put the gen-

eral average at 'One missionary, of either the General Society or Woman's Board, or the wife of a missionary, for each twenty-five thousand of the population.' This was not laid down as a hard-and-fast rule for all countries, nor all missionaries. Fields differ widely, and missionaries are no more equally efficient than other groups of Christian workers. However, it was thought that this was a fair average for China. This agrees substantially with estimates of other authorities."

The above deliverance from the Veteran of the group is long enough to give the others time to figure out that at this rate the Fukien field will call for one hundred families and as many unmarried women, or a multiplication of the present force by three.

"We are expensive agents," remarked the man with the largest family. "Exotics are always costly plants. We travel back and forth at least every seven or eight years, and oftener when there is a break-down. We have children to educate. Residences are necessary. The cost of living in all parts of the world is steadily increasing, and the changes will be more violent in the Orient than in the Occident, for here the standard has been so much lower. I believe it will average one thousand dollars a year to care for these foreign missionaries during the next few decades."

The Bachelor is disposed to consider the figure somewhat excessive until reminded that the admirably managed International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association calls for annual gifts of two thousand dollars to support a missionary family in the Orient, and finds the margin small enough.

"What would you do with two hundred new missionaries if they suddenly arrived from America?" is a startling question that sends all three into a brown study.

"There is no danger of any such calamity," finally remarks the senior of the trio. "It would be little short of a calamity, I admit. The starving man who gorges himself commits suicide. But the three hundred thousand dollars a year will not come so easily as all that; nor is suitable missionary material so abundant. While the church is reaching the proposed new standard of giving, and the young people are getting ready, the field will be preparing gradually to receive and digest the nourishment. Give the church in America and the church in China a decade to reach this maximum force, and neither will be severely strained."

"It's easy enough to see that we foreigners are not planning to be the whole thing," remarks the Iowa man. "This would put one family and a single lady to seventy-five thousand people. The capital of my native State, with one pastor, aided by his wife and a deaconess, would be considered a needy enough home mission field!"

"Yes, thank God, we do not have to do it all. Indeed, we are the smaller part of it. I remember that same Central Conference Committee thought we should aim during this generation to put a trained preacher and a Bible woman into every two thousand of the population, for which we plan. We would then have less than one third of the present American proportion of ministers."

"Here is where our work comes in," says the Educator. "We need to sharpen both our

pencils and our wits, to figure out an approximate estimate of the cost of such a complicated system for the creation of a Christian civilization. Who is sufficient for these things? I confess I shrink from such a seemingly impossible task."

"We missionaries must all learn the potency of callous knees. No amount of money will ever purchase the redemption of the Christless nations. It cost too much in the beginning. The lifeblood of thousands must be poured out. The rich alone can no more do this great work than the poor alone."

But the Bachelor brings the Veteran back to the stern realities of present problems: "Well, we all know that God is not limited by bank accounts; yet in modern mission work, bills of exchange seem to form a necessary factor of all large and permanent operations. Now, assuming that the human agents are normally spiritual and faithful, what are we to estimate as a probable outlay to prepare such a large number of trained workers? We must, of course, count upon a very large amount of shrinkage. Unless this is allowed for, our figures will be of little value."

The three heads are so close together and the figuring is so complicated that we fail utterly to follow through the maze of "primary schools," "preparatory institutions," "colleges." "Printing presses," "preachers," "chapels," "parsonages," "hospitals," "orphanages" are mingled in most bewildering fashion, while "self-support," "indigenous resources" are expressions that come in with every department. We begin to wonder if this thing will ever end?

"There goes the church bell!" exclaims the

Bachelor. "I must go to the 'Church of Heavenly Rest' to lead the singing."

"We have been here for three hours, unconscious of the flight of time. Let us see where we are. These figures total three quarters of a million dollars for the last year of this decade, and a gradual increase up to that amount. That is about four times what both Foreign Boards are now investing," remarks the Mission Treasurer.

The informal meeting adjourns rather abruptly. They have scarcely left the room when the Veteran rushes back with perceptible excitement. He calls for the others to come for just a moment. "That population figure of seven million five hundred thousand and that maximum annual budget of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for ten years hence have a remarkable relation to each other. The people are just ten times the dollars. We plan to spend ultimately ten cents of American money per capita per annum upon this Fukien field. That is the simplest possible unit of calculation. If this is an average field, and our estimates fairly correct, it would be a simple matter to make a maximum budget for the entire responsibility of the church by finding the population and dividing it by ten to get the number of dollars."

We learn later that the fruits of this Breakfast Conference are carefully scrutinized by the entire body of Fukien Methodist missionaries, and with slight changes in detail, but none in total, they are forwarded, with explanatory notes, to the Commission of Seven.

III

THE BURDEN

A MISSIONARY SECRETARY sits at his desk with his opened mail. It is a stormy day and the customary interruptions are less frequent. Five months ago he sent out the questionnaire concerning the budget and here are the replies. The Commission is to meet this afternoon and a report must be in shape for them. The China field is early in evidence. "West China Conference embraces twenty million people," is the report. "Central China is working in three provinces aggregating a population of over sixty millions. Making due allowance for other societies, we consider ourselves responsible for at least fifteen millions." The North China report reads: "Of the thirty millions in our territory, one third is not excessive for our responsibility." The Fukien report is very conservative: "Seven and one half millions for two large Annual Conferences."

"Fifty-two and one half millions in China alone, while Japan and Korea add another nine millions," soliloquizes the Secretary.

The nine Conferences and Missions of Southern Asia he finds put at fifty-three and one half millions. Twenty-two millions of black faces loom in the background as he reads of Africa, while the thirteen millions in Roman and Greek Catholic lands, in the Old World and the New, fill up the measure of the burden until it seems unbearable.

"What! Two o'clock? And I have forgotten to go to lunch!" He turns to greet a group of men at that moment entering his office.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen! You are on time and all together."

"Yes, we met at our favorite lunchroom and talked over our work a little. We have been wondering why we did not find you there too."

"No, I did not care for lunch to-day. I've been studying these reports, and it is enough to drive away one's appetite. Here are the figures that total up one hundred and fifty millions in foreign lands, for whose evangelization our missionary leaders consider we have made ourselves responsible. The thought that I am a secretary of the society through which this work must be done, if at all, has been sweeping over me like ocean billows in a typhoon. I am simply overwhelmed by it."

"In what sense are we as a church responsible for the evangelization of these vast populations?" asks a layman.

"Well, concerning some of the fields we have entered into definite agreements with other churches that we will take care of these people, and others have agreed to stay out. In North India, for example, Dr. Butler made such an arrangement with regard to a territory about five hundred miles long by one hundred and twenty wide. Eighteen millions of people were there at that time, and there are more than twenty millions now. In such fields these multitudes must look to us alone for the gospel of Christ."

"That is a fearful responsibility we are taking upon ourselves," objects one of the group.

"Even in commerce monopolies are not good for the welfare of the people, nor for the morals of the monopolists. Where is the justification for a monopoly in the supply of the Christian religion to a province in India, any more than for a corner on wheat in Chicago? Let us throw down the bars and invite all Christendom to come in and help us save these multitudes."

The silence that follows this deliverance shows that the argument seems well taken. What a simple and inexpensive way of getting rid of a large part of the Methodist Man's Burden this would be! Queer that we had not thought of it before!

The secretary reaches for a pamphlet. "Unfortunately we are not the only church that has a burden. Here is a report of a recent meeting of American and Canadian missionary secretaries. One paper gives the results of an investigation as to the field of responsibility of each large society. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society confesses to a responsibility for eighty millions, while the Northern Presbyterians recognize one hundred millions as their foreign parish. The American Board gives definite figures in each field amounting to seventy-five millions, and so on through the list. Our American constituency is nearly three times that of the Northern Baptists, nearly two and one half times that of the Northern Presbyterians, and more than four times that of the Congregational Churches. These already have taken upon themselves all they can carry. If we do let down the bars, there will be no tumbling over them to get into our rich heritage of responsibility. Every Northern Baptist communicant carries the burden of sixty-six un-

evangelized men, women, and children for whom Christ died. Every Northern Presbyterian is expected to send the gospel message to seventy-five Christless souls. Each member of the Congregational Church stands committed to an average individual responsibility for one hundred and one in foreign lands. If we accept this entire one hundred and fifty millions as our exclusive parish, with our three million two hundred and thirty-five thousand American members, each of us will be carrying forty-six. That will make the average Methodist Man's Burden forty per cent less than the lightest load assumed by any of the other great missionary churches named. I do not see how we can face either God or man and reduce the load. Let us shoulder it like men!"

The solemn silence following this deliverance is broken by a voice husky with emotion:

"I move that the report of the Commission be that in our judgment the minimum foreign responsibility of the Methodist Episcopal Church is for not less than one hundred and fifty millions."

There is no dissent.

"What is the estimated cost of this work?" inquires a practical man of affairs.

"The heaviest cost is not in dollars. How many of us have a son or a daughter to give?" asks the secretary.

At length a wealthy layman breaks the painful silence: "Sure enough, the homes of Methodism will pay the greatest price. We have heard too much of the money cost as compared with the lives of our ablest sons, our best-loved daughters. I could support half a dozen children of other men with less sacrifice than would

be required to give my only daughter. How many are called for?"

"The most frequent figure seen on these sheets is one for every twenty-five thousand of the population to be evangelized, or one family for each fifty thousand. The unmarried women and wives of missionaries are reckoned equally in the twenty-five thousand estimate."

"They don't want them all at once, do they?"

"By no means. A decade is allowed for reaching this maximum," replies the secretary.

"That means six thousand men and women for the Methodist foreign parish after ten years, or at the rate of six hundred a year," says a quick calculator. "We might put it: Two hundred men, with their wives, and as many unmarried women annually."

"Yes, it will take that many new people each year to raise our present force to six thousand in ten years, for the twelve hundred now on the field would not more than provide for the necessary losses by death, breakdowns, and retreats, among so many during the decade." The secretary heaves a sigh as he thinks of the long list of these "casualties" in the great campaign.

"Where will you find two hundred men a year?" exclaims the Commissioner from the frontier.

"In commerce the demand soon creates a supply," replies the Manufacturer. "It is no less true of the things of the Spirit. And I for one want to say that if the best of our young men and women, with life all before them, and opportunities without number here at home, are willing and eager to give themselves to the regeneration of pagan Asia and Africa, it is a shame and a disgrace that we who stay at home,

enjoying all the blessings of this Christian civilization, are not willing to send them. They offer their red heart's blood, and we withhold our yellow dirt! How much of it is called for?"

"These figures do not claim to be the last word upon the subject; and they vary with the field and the point of view of the calculators; but the most minute estimate, and what seems in the main to agree with the general average, calls for a gradual increase for the next decade until the maximum reaches about ten cents per capita for the population to be evangelized."

"A foreign parish of one hundred and fifty millions at ten cents per capita calls for fifteen million dollars annually by the year 1923. That is a man's job, sure!" exclaims the Manufacturer.

It is time for the Laymen's Missionary Movement secretary to speak: "Yes, but it is less than five dollars apiece for us, or nine cents a week, even now; and if we make as good progress in membership in the next decade as in the past, it will be less than four dollars each by the time it is called for. The Laymen's Missionary Movement has already set the standard of 'Five dollars per member for foreign missions.' Surely it is not for us to lower the figure that the men who are to give the money have voluntarily set up.

"Moreover, at our present rate of giving of two and two fifths millions a year by the Foreign Board and the Woman's Society combined, to reach this fifteen-million figure in ten years, *we will have to increase at the rate of only twenty per cent each year over the previous year.* Looked at from this angle of gradual ascent, the climb does not seem so steep."

"Yes," says the Manufacturer, "that is an excellent way to put it. The momentum of such a movement ought to carry us forward at the rate of twenty per cent increase annually for a decade. It is positively easier to interest men in a big proposition than in a little one. Who would undertake to save a man from sin with a smaller expenditure than two street-car fares a year? Our 'two and two fifths million dollars' sounds well; but when given by over three and one quarter million people, it is only seventy-four cents for each of us. And when distributed among the one hundred and fifty millions of our foreign parish, it amounts to one and two thirds cents apiece! Upon an average family of five we expend in a twelve-month the equivalent of the price of one quart of good dairy milk! That is one reason why practical men who are accustomed to do things cannot believe that we mean business when we talk about 'the evangelization of the world in this generation.' We are not using adequate means. 'The sincere milk of the Word' for famishing nations at an annual cost of two pints of cow's milk per family is too diluted for 'the man in the street' to take seriously. This proposition is to make it six quarts. For my part I do not see how it can be done for that. It must be Omnipotence backing our impotence. Manifestly our missionary leaders are relying upon their converts' paying most of the cost. I move that we report the following:

"We find that to meet our Methodist Episcopal responsibility for the one hundred and fifty millions in our foreign parish, we call upon our people for the ensuing decade annually to dedicate six hundred of their sons and daughters

for this work; and that their gifts in money be increased annually by twenty per cent over the previous year, so they gradually will raise their annual contributions to fifteen million dollars by the year 1923."

And as the silent vote is taken, with every hand uplifted, as in pledge to God to help carry out the momentous resolution, instinctively with one accord these men bow before their Lord and pour out such prayer as comes only in moments when strong men are in the very presence of their King.

IV

"THE COMMISSION ON FINANCE"

"THE Commission will please come to order!" and the presiding bishop raps gently upon the table.

"In this our first session, it may not be out of place to state briefly how and why we are here. The General Conference at Minneapolis was flooded with petitions to relieve the church of the multitudinous calls for financial help. Irresponsible parties exploited the churches. The success of each of these cries for aid depended largely upon the ability of the pleader, rather than upon the merits of the cause. It is not at all surprising that from 1908 to 1912 the offerings from public congregations to the official benevolences fell off $15,127. We are here now to consider how we can concentrate interests and plan a campaign of conquest instead of simply 'holding the fort.'"

The apportionment secretary secures the floor: "I move you, sir, that the percentages for the distribution of undesignated offerings be as follows:

"Forty-four per cent, Board of Foreign Missions.

"Thirty-eight per cent, Board of Home Missions and Church Extension.

"Seven per cent, Freedmen's Aid Society.

"Five per cent, Board of Sunday Schools.

"Three per cent, Board of Education.

"Two per cent, American Bible Society.

"One per cent, Church Temperance Society."

The apportionment secretary speaks as an expert, and though there is considerable discussion, yet the Commission finally agrees to his proposition.

The recording secretary of the Commission has a statement:

"Gentlemen, the General Conference instructed us to determine our askings 'upon the basis of present and probable future needs, and not upon the basis of former askings or percentage.' Now I have here the askings of these several boards, and they total over twenty millions. It will be sheer waste of time, in my judgment, to apportion such a huge sum to the churches at the agreed ratio, for it is fully six times the aggregate of the regular receipts from collections by these boards last year. We must reduce this to figures that are within the horizon, if the apportionments are to be taken seriously."

All eyes are turned to the Ready Calculator, whose task is figuring the apportionments.

"Mr. Chairman and Brethren, before the days of the Interstate Commerce Commission, a great railway magnate was accustomed to instruct his managers to fix rates at 'All the traffic will bear.' Theoretically our apportionments are to be according to the needs of the work, but practically we are limited by the simple rule, 'All the churches will bear.' For example, take the Board of Foreign Missions. While the entire receipts last year were one million five hundred and thirty-nine thousand four hundred and ninety-four dollars, yet the Conference collections were but one million forty-six thousand one hundred and fourteen dollars of this amount, or about two thirds of the whole.

Lapsed annuities, legacies, and special gifts reached nearly a half a million. In considering the amount to be apportioned to the Conferences, if we fix this at one million eight hundred thousand, while it will be a net increase from all sources of only twenty-three per cent, yet it will represent a total increase from the Conference collections of seventy-two per cent. An apportionment of that figure seems to me to be the maximum that the church will stand, and I move that it be so ordered."

The Commission accepts this figure from the acknowledged expert; and the other items follow based upon the ratio already decided:

Board of Foreign Missions	$1,800,000
Board of Home Missions and Church Extension	1,560,000
Freedmen's Aid Society	270,000
Board of Sunday Schools	210,000
Board of Education	135,000
American Bible Society	100,000
Church Temperance Society	50,000
Grand total	$4,125,000

Again the Ready Calculator rises:

"While this sum is only an average of two and one half cents a week for each of our three million two hundred and thirty-five thousand members, yet it is a total advance over last year's actual receipts through these same channels, exclusive of special gifts, legacies, and such like, of one and one quarter millions, or forty-three per cent. We have not been idle in the past. What other church in Christendom has a more thorough organization than we? And who have worked it more vigorously? To make anything approaching such a large proportional advance in one year will require

either a new method or an entirely new application of the old; for such achievements never happen by mere enthusiasm."

"What proposal have you to make to meet the case?" inquires the presiding bishop.

"We have had in vogue for many years a system of apportionments that sometimes has worked well. Secretary McCabe used it with splendid effect in his great 'Million for Missions' campaign. But we have never put it upon a rational basis, and there have been many complaints that it is not equitable. I have worked out a plan by which the four elements of church life are all accurately and proportionately recognized:

"1. Membership in full.

"2. Net valuation of property.

"3. Total ministerial support.

"4. Total disciplinary collections.

"The method of calculation is simple, but too elaborate to present to you here. If you will appoint a small committee to work out the details, it may be more satisfactory."

The committee is appointed, and, of course, the Ready Calculator is its chairman.

"What are my instructions?"

"Mr. Chairman, I move that this apportionment secretary and his committee be directed to prepare printed lists of the equitable apportionments for each district in America by pastoral charges, and send them direct to the district superintendents; and the superintendents distribute them to the pastors, with instructions that their charges are expected to raise the amounts indicated."

This from a hitherto silent member of the Commission.

The senior Foreign Board secretary arises:

"I fear that there will be little inspiration and much perspiration in a campaign that puts its plea chiefly upon a mathematical estimate, however 'equitable' it may be. Let us not forget that the ideal 'As for Ourselves, so for Others,' has been our accepted motto for half a decade. We must trust our people if we would lead them. The Divine standard is not too lofty; let us not lower nor ignore it. I move to amend by adding:

"We call special attention of pastors and people that this apportionment is not intended as a goal, but a minimum, and that we again emphasize the standard already recognized by our church, 'As much for benevolences as for the local church budget.' "

The new program is agreed to with enthusiasm, and the Commission adjourns *sine die*.

V

"CHASING—AROUND THE STUMP"

"WE will begin the Quarterly Conference by singing that grand old hymn of victory, 'Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,'" announces Dr. Middleroad, the district superintendent.

"I hope you will show a good increase in your membership this year," remarks Dr. Middleroad, after the hymn and his fervent prayer. "Most of the charges on my district seem to be at a standstill, but I am depending upon 'Old Hickory Street' to bring up the total, so that we will make a fair showing after all."

"Thus far, I am sorry to say," replies Pastor Playfair, "we have only about held our own. We have taken in quite a number by letter, and a few adults have joined on probation, and will be received before Conference; but we have been pruning our church tree of dead branches. There are a number who have been of no account to us for a long time, never attending church nor contributing a cent. The truth is that under the new financial plan we are being assessed for a lot of people who pay nothing. Our brethren felt it was unfair for the payers to meet their own bills and also pay for these 'has-beens.' So we have taken off about as many names as we have added."

"You will all be glad, I am sure," says Miss Joy, the Junior League superintendent, "to hear that there is a fine class of twenty-three of our Junior boys and girls who have been meet-

ing regularly and doing splendidly in learning and living, and they would be glad to be received into the church any time. I can heartily recommend them. One is Brother Foresight's Jimmie, and several others are your own children."

"That is splendid!" cried Dr. Middleroad. "These at least will be clear gain for the year's membership. We will take them in to-morrow."

But the church treasurer does not look happy, and Dr. Middleroad is sensitive to gloom in that quarter.

"What's the matter, Brother Foresight? Are you not pleased that your boy is following in your footsteps?"

"Yes, Doctor, I am glad that Jimmie is a Christian; and I hope that he and all the boys and girls will keep on in the 'good old way their fathers trod.' But it seems to me that this is not the time to receive a large class of noncontributors into the church. Next year's apportionment is to be estimated in part upon our full membership reported this year. These children will add to our assessment for benevolences without contributing a dollar. Who is going to pay these bills?"

"I confess I had not thought of that." Dr. Middleroad looks distressed. "It seems to me we should not commercialize even our children's reception into the church!"

But the watchdog of the treasury persists. "These children are already reported as probationers, and it will not hurt them to wait until after Annual Conference. It will be only six weeks. Then they can be taken in without immediately affecting the assessment."

To avoid further discussion, Dr. Middleroad

passes to the next question: "What change do you want made in the valuation of your property this year?"

"I've been thinking that our reported valuation of fifty thousand dollars is too high," replies the president of the Board of Trustees. "Church property is not a good commercial investment, except when the site becomes valuable in old downtown churches. Here we are being assessed for these benevolences on a valuation of our property which correctly represents what we put into it, but if offered for sale, no one would pay anything like that amount. If the government taxed church property it would not be assessed at more than thirty thousand dollars. Now where is the justice of taxing ourselves at a higher rate than the State would consider just? I understand that the assessment for benevolences counts property at five dollars and twenty-three cents per thousand, so that we are charged two hundred and sixty-two dollars on our fifty-thousand-dollar valuation. If we reduce this by twenty thousand dollars, it would lower our assessment by one hundred and four dollars and sixty cents, which would be quite a relief. I therefore move that we put our property valuation at thirty thousand dollars."

The motion prevails.

Pastor Playfair politely retires as Dr. Middleroad remarks, "Now we will talk about next year." A silence, and then, "What about the return of Brother Playfair? Does he fill the bill?"

"We all love our pastor, and he has been working hard," replies the Sunday school superintendent. "However, a good many of us think that a change might be a good thing for our

young folks. Can you not get for us young Dr. Hustler, who is at Advance Street Church in Rushville? People say he brings things to pass."

"Perhaps Advance Street people will not agree to give up their successful preacher to accommodate you. He is getting fifteen hundred dollars and a house over there, and they will make it two thousand dollars rather than lose him. And that is all you are paying Brother Playfair," remarks the diplomatic superintendent.

Recording Steward Goforth comes to the rescue: "If we can get Dr. Hustler by an advance of five hundred dollars on salary, I think we ought to do it. You see we have just made a little over a hundred dollars off the benevolence budget by the new valuation, and we can get the extra four hundred in some way."

"Has Brother Goforth forgotten that the one hundred dollars will not be all clear gain?" breaks in Treasurer Foresight excitedly. "We add five hundred dollars to our ministerial support, and we will be assessed six dollars and thirty-eight cents per hundred, or thirty-one dollars and ninety cents more for our benevolences; so that of the one hundred and four dollars and sixty cents he thought we had gained from benevolences, we have only seventy-two dollars and seventy cents left to apply to this proposed increase of five hundred dollars in order to secure the live preacher from Advance Street. Brethren, let us be cautious and not oversanguine. Business conditions are very uncertain. I favor letting well enough alone and not adding to our budget until we see where the money will come from."

The Conference agrees. Pastor Playfair reënters, unconscious of his narrow escape.

"What amounts have been received for benevolent causes this year?" reads Dr. Middleroad from his question list.

Treasurer Foresight is again on his feet. "We are having a peculiar time with our budget this year. We have more money than we know what to do with, yet we are not reaching our apportionment by twenty-five per cent."

"That certainly is paradoxical! Please explain yourself."

"It is this way. Last winter our Brother Vision went to a Laymen's Missionary Convention and came back a regular crank on foreign missions. He is not a rich man, but he gets a good salary in the Novelty Manufacturing Works here, and has an interest in the business as well. He came to me saying he wanted to give three hundred dollars this year for foreign missions alone. I said, 'Why, man! that's nearly as much as the whole church is doing! Are you gone clean crazy?' But he just smiled and said, 'No, I've only come to myself.' Then I said, 'That is all right, if you want to blow in your money that way, but next year our assessment will be raised twenty-nine dollars and fifty cents for each hundred dollars you give, and the rest of us will have to pay nearly ninety dollars more than we do now, or the church lose its rank.' 'Very well,' said he. 'If you don't want my money, I know how I can give it so it will not embarrass the other members of the church.' Later he handed me a receipt from the Foreign Board Office for three hundred dollars, which he had sent to build a chapel in China. However, the voucher cannot be credited to our

church in the Conference minutes, because we are short seventy-five dollars on our assessment for Foreign Missions."

"That reminds me," remarks the Sunday school superintendent. "The school made an advance of one hundred dollars in its collections this year that we thought might go to the Home and Foreign Mission Boards, but Brother Foresight explained to us that next year we would have to keep it up, and add another thirty dollars for the increased assessment, so we decided to purchase a new organ."

"The Epworth League supports a preacher in India at fifty dollars, and gets letters of his work, has his photograph, and is quite enthusiastic," the League president adds, "but that, too, cannot be credited, because the church is short on its apportionment."

Deaconess Phoebe asks for the privilege of saying a few words:

"It seems to me a great pity that when Old Hickory Street is doing so much for missions, yet it is classed by our church rules as one that is not reaching its apportionment. In addition to the three hundred and fifty dollars special gifts going to the foreign field that we have just heard of, we have two active women's societies. This year they have raised in money and supplies fully six hundred dollars. This makes nearly one thousand dollars that our people are giving for missions at home and abroad, for which we get no recognition in the apportionments."

Dr. Middleroad looks distressed. "It certainly seems as though we have spent our whole evening chasing around this old stump and butting up against the apportionment system at

every turn. You have had a fairly good year at Old Hickory Street, but no one would suspect it from your statistical report. If the best charge in the district scarcely holds its own, where will the medium and small ones appear? This Methodist Lazarus is alive all right, but we have 'bound him hand and foot with grave-clothes.' We must find some way to 'loose him and let him go.' After the reading of the records, you will stand adjourned."

VI

"LOOSE HIM AND LET HIM GO!"

THE great convention of Methodist men has come together to face their Burden, to take stock of their latent strength, and to consider how that power may be put under the load. In numbers they equal the Spirit-baptized multitude at Pentecost. They are confronting a crisis no less acute than that of the company at Jerusalem. Already the Commission on Foreign Survey has presented its findings of one hundred and fifty millions. The probable cost in men and money has been considered and accepted as a "reasonable service."

The no less imperative appeal of the twelve millions of Americans for whom our three and one quarter million members are reckoned responsible has been heard and there is no more disposition to shirk the Burden here than yonder. The "city frontier," with its "million-a-year" increase, is admitted by these men of might as a major obligation and a prime opportunity. The colossal higher education problem, with its vast budgets and vital issues in the character and faith of the future generations, has loomed before, but has not staggered them. They have seen not only the hosts of the enemy, but their eyes have been opened by prophetic prayer, they have had a vision of the spiritual forces God is marshaling to the conquest and they realize that "they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

Of course our old friend the Manufacturer is here, and all are attention as he rises to speak:

"Brethren, this enthusiasm is all very well,

but we dare not shut our eyes to the fact that there is little or no increase in our regular collections from year to year. Since the present organization of the Board of Foreign Missions, six years ago, the Conference contributions, including Sunday schools, have increased from nine hundred and eighty-eight thousand eight hundred and fifty-six dollars in 1907 to only one million forty-six thousand one hundred and thirteen dollars in 1912, and this is a falling off of fifty-five thousand dollars as compared with the year 1910. We reached the lowest point in this six-years' period in 1909 and the highest in the next year. In short, we are oscillating about the million line and not getting on. Now, will some of you philosophers tell us what is the matter?"

The chairman recognizes Judge Insight:

"There is one feature of our present campaign that seems to me open to serious question. I mean our apportionment system. In my professional life I have had a good deal to do with the assessment of State taxes, and I declare to you, that while I have known thousands of men who, if need be, would die for their country, I have yet to meet one who enjoys paying taxes to support that country. Every citizen, no matter how loyal he may be, is displeased when his tax rate is increased, and wonders, 'Who is getting that graft, anyhow?' And the patriot is yet to be born who is not happy to have his tax rate lowered. Who ever heard of a subject or citizen in any land so filled with generous loyalty that he overpaid his tax bill?

"Now, without intending it, this newly organized Apportionment Bureau has put the whole matter of official benevolences in the

minds of the average of preacher and people into the position of an assessment. Right here is the fatal weakness: the State can collect the last dollar of taxation, whether the citizen likes it or not, but if the members do not pay up, what can the church do about it?"

Professor Wideview secures recognition with difficulty:

"I think that Judge Insight has put his finger upon our Achilles's heel. The characteristic feature of the age in which we live is revolt against autocracy of every kind. We can no longer say to the church, 'Do this,' and 'she doeth it.' Of all things, where people resent interference or dictation from another, it is in their giving. No wonder we are in a treadmill, wearily tramping in order to stand still!"

Of course our friend Brother Vision is here: "There is a still more serious aspect to this important subject. The figures sent out in this way are almost universally looked upon as the ultimate goal. When reached by any charge or any district, the people concerned, with smug satisfaction, think they have done their whole duty to God and man. The average official member no more thinks of oversubscribing the apportionment than overpaying the coal bill or the sexton. Theoretically, the apportionment is the minimum, but when you print the expense budget and the apportionments on every pledge card you send out to each member, there is only one impression that can be given, and that is that these are the sums asked for. No one thinks of raising more than is required for the expense budget. If there is a surplus, it is carried into the next year. If there is an excess in the benevolences, why not carry that also

into the next year? This is actually done in many cases! The worst handicap this system puts upon even our most generous givers is that it lowers their ideals and satisfies them with wholly inadequate standards of giving."

"The Chair recognizes Doctor Middleroad!"

"Brother Vision complains that this apportionment system puts our people's *ideals down.* Professor Wideview thinks it gets their '*backs up.*' From a year's experience on my district I'm inclined to think that both are right. But the greatest loss is not to the treasuries of the benevolence boards, serious though that seems to be, but to the churches themselves. On my district this year with every stroke of our oars we have had this undertow pulling us back. It has even hindered our growth in membership. At the fourth Quarterly Conference in one of the leading charges a class of twenty-three Junior League boys and girls were recommended for full membership. Several of their fathers were in the Quarterly Conference. It was pointed out by the treasurer that to receive them now would add to the apportionment for next year, so it was decided to wait until after the Annual Conference.

"A few days later, as I was going along the street, two boys in knickerbockers were just ahead of me. One said, 'Goin' to the Junior League this afternoon, Jimmie?' 'Naw! What do you want to go there for, anyhow? They don't want us.' 'Aw, cut it! Miss Joy's all right.' 'Yes,' said Jimmie, 'there's nothin' the matter with her. But those old guys got together the other night and talked about takin' us in to the meetin' house reg'lar, and some of 'em said it would cost a pile, for none of us could

pay anything, so they got cold feet. They decided to take care of their dope an' let us kids wait. I'm done with 'em. Let's go to the movies.'

"And they did. I went to my study and looked it up. It took a good while to figure it out, but I found it would have raised the church's apportionment for benevolences thirty-four cents for each of those twenty-three Juniors. God pity us! Our children not worth three for a dollar to the church! What will you do about a system that is capable of such abuse?"

A hush falls over the great assembly and every gesticulating candidate for the floor quiets down as the Apostolic Veteran arises:

"Mr. Chairman and Brethren, I have listened to the discussion of this vital question with intense interest. I do not dispute anything that has been said, but there is a deeper reason than has yet been given why the overworking of the apportionment system is fatal to our benevolences: *It has not the sanction of God's Word.* Even under the dispensation of the law, freewill offerings were the most acceptable. How much more under Grace! Our Lord is quoted by Paul as saying, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' The first great apostle to the Christless nations gives most explicit instructions upon this subject to the church at Corinth. The Macedonian Christians had first set the example: 'Beyond their power they gave of their own accord.' Paul directs the Corinthians, 'See that ye abound in this grace also,' but hastens to qualify the order by adding, 'I speak not by way of commandment.' And finally, this master-builder of the church for all ages and nations lays down the fundamental

principle: 'Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.'

"Now I submit that the present method of applying this apportionment system has ignored the scriptural instructions upon this subject. As Judge Insight has already pointed out, this autocratic mathematical apportionment tends to put the average official board in the attitude of a tax-payer trying to beat down the assessor to the lowest possible figure. No plan that we may adopt can succeed, even as men count success, that disregards the plain teaching of God's Word. The Holy Spirit leaves us to our own devices; and without him we can do nothing."

The treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions secures recognition:

"Brethren, we have heard in turn from the Philosopher, the Historian, the Idealist, the Administrator, and the Prophet. All agree that there is something radically wrong in the way this apportionment method is being worked, but their theories would be of little value if the figures proved the opposite. I have made a careful study of the receipts of all the boards for the last quadrennium, 1908 to 1911 inclusive, and have compared the totals with the previous four years. Here are the figures:

Loss in the collections from the congregations.....	$15,127	
The gain from the Sunday school was.....	110,608	
This makes a net gain from regular sources of.....		$95,481
The gain in special gifts was.....		180,608
The gain of the women's societies...		248,545
Total gain.....		$524,634

"We find the women's societies increasing a quarter of a million dollars, and special gifts more than one sixth of a million, and the Sunday schools more than one tenth of a million. These three sources of income have been free from the pressure of the old apportionment system. The women voluntarily agree to raise these vast sums and the special gifts are entirely freewill offerings. No special proportion of the apportionments is allotted to the Sunday schools, and the children know nothing of the prodding from this quarter. It is to the collections from the congregations that the former apportionment has been applied, and we have here an actual decrease of fifteen thousand dollars! The system in the past has failed to deliver the goods; and now, instead of having less of it, it is proposed to remedy previous disasters by working it harder and more scientifically! I submit that it has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Let us find a more excellent way."

Our old leader, the Manufacturer, is gladly given the platform:

"We have about used up the apportionment system, and in the main I agree with the arguments presented. However, your attitude is not necessarily one of open rebellion against established order. The truth is that the fault lies with the *abuse* rather than with the use of this ingenious mathematical formula. The action of the General Conference and of the Finance Commission was that this should indicate the minimum standard. But it has been treated in such a way that the church looks upon it as the ultimate goal. It has its uses as a minimum to keep the willfully derelict

from falling back. I can illustrate what I mean easier than I can define it:

"I live in a hilly country, and in my auto I keep a small block of wood to use in case of accident on a hillside to prevent the machine from slipping back down hill. But I do not put the block into the gasoline tank! I know it has no power to push. Nor do I hang it up before the eyes of all my passengers, to make them think I am expecting a breakdown or that I will run out of gasoline. I hide it away where I can reach it in case of necessity, but nobody else knows it is there.

"Now that is all a minimum apportionment is good for, simply a chock to keep the derelicts from retrograding. It has no real power for advance. The mistake is in putting out these tables to the general public. I doubt the wisdom of sending them to the pastors at all. I would put them only in the hands of the district superintendents and let them use the chock in case of a breakdown, or an exhausted tank, until the machine is put in order or supplied with gasoline."

"May I ask a question?" puts in a secretary of one of the boards.

"Certainly."

"You will admit, I presume, that there must be some sort of a standard set up, or we would have a go-as-you-please arrangement that would develop great inequalities and dissatisfaction. Now, if the apportionment system, as at present worked, is a failure, what will you substitute for it?"

"That is a perfectly fair question. Fortunately the contention of these speakers here this morning is neither treason nor rebellion.

We are only opposing a misapplication of a useful method. Of course we should have a standard. The General Conference of 1908 put a standard before the church in Paragraph 52 of the Appendix. The editors of the Discipline of 1912 did not republish it, but the section of 1908 was not rescinded at Minneapolis. The editors were authorized to *edit*, not to *write*, the Discipline, and their omission, which might have been accidental, does not nullify the legislation at Baltimore. Hear it and see for yourselves that we do not 'make the law of none effect; but we establish the law':

"We should accept the apportionments as the minimum requirement, a standard of what must be raised without peradventure, while at the same time we set before us the larger standard of the Golden Rule, and, loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, seek to make our gifts for spiritual ministry to others equal our contributions for our own spiritual development, so that in every church the standard shall be *as much for the benevolent work as for the support of the local congregation.*

"Here is a standard that has lift in it. When you put up an ideal that has beneath it the Golden Rule, the most widely accepted of Christian principles, you disarm criticism at the start. But when you present a definite sum figured out by mathematics, however ingenious, without regard to local conditions, even regenerate human nature rebels. Let the 'Every-Member Canvass' committees and the pastors lovingly hold up before our people this 'reasonable service,' 'not by way of commandment,' but to be made a subject of prayerful thought around the fireside, at the family altar, in the

'Morning Watch.' Ask each giver to consider how near he can approach 'for others' to that figure which he himself has decided he should do 'for himself.' The more he thinks and prays about it, the more reasonable it will appear. There is abundant room for advance on this basis, for our benevolences now reach only about five millions, while our current church expenses, exclusive of building, total nearly twenty-four millions. Here is an ideal more lofty than any apportionment committee ever would dare go, yet without arousing as much opposition as even the lowest man-made standard."

A modest but masterful-looking layman secures recognition:

"It has been my work for many years to superintend a reformatory for boys. We have no guardhouse. Our system of government is one of rewards. Our only form of punishment is withholding privileges. We have four grades, A, B, C, and D. Every boy enters in C Grade, and advances or falls back as he conducts himself. Once in a while there is an incorrigible whom we turn over to the State Reformatory. It is astonishing how responsive these boys are to this system of appeal to the best in them to do their best. It seems to me that this is God's law for lifting men up. Why not the church of Christ? Let every pastoral charge whose benevolences reach one hundred per cent of its local budget be in A Grade, below one hundred per cent, but above seventy-five per cent, B Grade; below seventy-five per cent, but above fifty per cent, C Grade; below fifty per cent, but above twenty-five per cent, D Grade; below twenty-five per cent, unclassified. If our bad boys are made into good citizens by such

methods, what progress may we not expect with our millions of Methodist Christians!"

Dr. Middleroad again secures an attentive hearing:

"We are headed in the right direction now, and it seems to me I can feel the loosening of the 'grave-clothes.' They will drop off altogether when we get a system that gives justice to all and appreciates every sacrifice that anybody makes for the Kingdom. Let us hold aloft that divinely human and humanly divine standard: 'As for ourselves, so for others; as for our own land, so for other lands.' Then let us give full credit for what anybody and everybody does. Our two women's societies raised nearly one and three quarter millions of dollars last year, yet all this does not count in the official benevolences! Let us cease this 'baby act' policy and reckon in all that the people give 'for others' as over against their budget 'for themselves.' Not a few churches would pass even the one hundred per cent mark if the work of the women was recognized. Then there are gifts for higher education other than through the Board of Education, that are for our own colleges, and why should such not be counted? The more we appreciate what people do, the more willing they are to do it again, and to do better."

The Manufacturer has a proposition to offer: "Brethren, I move

"First, That it is the sense of this Convention that the apportionments be made as a minimum and be put into the hands of each district superintendent, to be used by him only in case of emergency.

"Second, That we reaffirm the action of the

Methodist Episcopal section of the National Laymen's Missionary Congress held in Chicago, May, 1910, and later indorsed by the benevolent boards of our church, that our goal is the standard raised by the General Conference of 1908, 'As much for missions and other benevolences as for the local church budget.'

"Third, That in order to make this standard effective, we urge the Commission on Finance to classify the charges upon this basis, in the manner suggested here a few minutes ago, or in some other way, as they may deem best; and that credit be given in this classification for all authorized benevolences, including the women's boards and church educational enterprises.

"It seems to me there is no need for further speech. We are now ready to ACT."

"We will have a rising vote," declares the presiding officer. "All who favor this entire proposition arise!"

Three thousand men are upon their feet—the key-men of Methodism.

"Those who will pledge themselves to do all in their power, God helping, to achieve this standard in their home churches and in the church at large, as you stand, raise aloft your right hands."

A forest of hands swing into the air. The great organ peals forth "Coronation," and three thousand men's voices shake the vast auditorium with:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

VII

"NEW HICKORY STREET"

"IT hardly seems possible that it is only a year since we met here in the last Fourth Quarterly Conference," remarks Dr. Middleroad, after the singing of "The Son of God goes forth to war, A Kingly crown to gain," and half a dozen voluntary half-minute prayers that pour out praise that could not be pent up. "Then we were circling around a tether where the grass had been eaten and trampled bare. We are now in pastures green and boundless. What is the report on membership?"

Pastor Playfair comes up smiling: "We have a different story from last year; but I do not take much credit for it to myself. I have been but one of a hundred who have got new life in this joyful service. It began when Brother Vision came back from the great Laymen's Convention. He suggested that I call the brethren together for a conference in the light of the things done there. He told us of a great debate that was all on one side—"

"Let me tell about that," breaks in Treasurer Foresight. "I want Dr. Middleroad to know that I am not offended, but thankful for the speech he made. Brother Vision told, as gently as he could, but without varnish, how I had shut the door of the church in my boy's face for a paltry thirty-four cents. It broke me all up. I saw how sordid I had become and how I had got into the habit of commercializing even these priceless things of life. I went home,

but not to sleep. That night was my Gethsemane. I covenanted with my heavenly Father that if he would help me win back my boy, he might draw upon me for all I possessed. In future I would be only a steward of my Lord's goods, all subject to his order. I soon saw that if I would win my own boy I must be interested in his playmates as well; and that meant their chums too, and every boy in town. I talked with Miss Joy, and found she was as broken-hearted about it all as I was. We hunted up an architect and had him figure on a junior annex to the church with gymnasium and reading-room, and an equipment that would 'compel them to come in.' I called the brethren together and told them that it would cost ten thousand and that I would put up half. They were glad to do the rest. We have our own 'movies' now. We've taken down the signs 'Keep off the grass.' We'll go to raising grass again when we have no more boys to raise. Several months ago we took in all that last year's twenty-three, and Jimmie and the rest have helped prepare thirty more, who will be welcomed to-morrow. Some of these are from poor families, children of immigrants, but they are men in the making, companions of our boys in school, citizens of our great republic and of the kingdom of God.

"I have a shorter bank account than a year ago, but I have had more fun this year than in any five years of my life. That five thousand dollars, if left for Jimmie to spend after I'm gone, or perhaps before, might have helped him to buy a through ticket to perdition. I've put it where it paves a road that he and scores of other men's boys are glad to travel right up to the Eternal City."

"I wish Brother Foresight's experience

might be told to every Christian father in America," says Dr. Middleroad, with deep feeling.

Pastor Playfair resumes his story: "I was about to tell about our increase in membership. We have not had a sweeping revival, but we have had a lot of resurrections. You see, when the 'Every-Member Canvass' was arranged we found many names that we had dropped because we wanted to prune the roll to keep down apportionments. Our men said, 'We have neglected these people until it is no wonder they've quit coming. We don't want to hunt them up now and ask them for money the first thing.' So we divided up the list among a dozen or more and began to cultivate them. Two thirds of them have come back, and we report them as increase, for they were not counted last year. With these twenty-seven and the fifty-two children, including to-morrow's bunch, and the two dozen adults received from probation and seventeen by letter, we report above losses for various cause a round hundred increase."

"That is something to shout over! Just the kind of growth that lasts!" exults Dr. Middleroad. "Now, how about the valuation of property?"

The president of the Board of Trustees takes this as his opportunity for a confession: "I've been ashamed of my littleness all the year, Doctor. How contemptible to haggle over the fifty-thousand-dollars valuation, when everybody knows we could not duplicate this plant now for ten per cent more than that. I move that we restore the old figure which represents our investment and add ten thousand dollars for the new junior annex."

"It is unanimous. I wonder if you are equally of one mind regarding your pastor for next year?" cautiously inquires the chairman.

"You need not go. We've talked it over and we want you to hear all we have to say about you," eagerly breaks in the Sunday school superintendent, and Pastor Playfair blushingly resumes his seat.

"Last year some of us would have been pleased with a change. I was among them. I now see that the trouble was with ourselves. We were so sordid, self-centered, and lifeless, that no one could have pleased us long. This year we have had a new people and a new pastor."

"Who could not preach to such hearers!" modestly exclaims Pastor Playfair.

"How did it all come about?" asks Dr. Middleroad.

"We will have to go back to that little conference with which we started," explains Treasurer Foresight. "Brother Vision simply told us the story. You have heard what that narrative did for me. We all saw the hollow mockery of our self-centeredness as a church. Then he pointed the way out. He told of the one hundred and fifty million foreign parish, and the fifteen million home parish all outside of our little locality. He said that those three thousand men had pledged themselves to do at least as much for the 'other fellow' at home and abroad as for their local congregations. None of us believed it would be possible for 'Old Hickory Street' to reach Class A the first year, but we agreed that we would give the people a fair chance. We would have the 'Every-Member Canvass and the Duplex Envelope and the Weekly Offering,' the methods that have suc-

ceeded so wonderfully elsewhere. We knew that we were not prepared for these things, but we asked the pastor to put in a month of cultivation to get us all ready. We covenanted together to pray daily for this work. We sent for the literature. What a lot of it there is, and how well got up! We had Sunday evening platform meetings, and three or four of us would speak on different phases of the work previously assigned and prepared, using this fine literature. How the people opened their eyes! What a big and needy world it is! The frontier, the South, the cities, the country, all worse off than we! The one hundred and fifty millions in foreign fields made them stare and weep and forget themselves. Sunday after Sunday our pastor poured out his soul. No money was asked. A new experience for our people—a missionary sermon and no collection! The prayer meetings filled up and boiled up. We had something to pray for besides ourselves. We were learning the blessedness of intercession.

"Then came the 'last great day of the feast.' We met early and prayed, and then started for our work. Nobody was asked to give any fixed sum. For weeks the motto had been hung on the walls, 'As for Ourselves, so for Others; as for Our Own Land, so for Other Lands.' It had been the deep undertone of all the teaching. It had become so familiar that it seemed like the most natural thing for a Christian to do. Some did more than that, others less, but cheerfully declaring that they would try to reach it another year. The weekly offering in bipocket envelope has become a habit now with most of us.

"Results? Benevolences more than doubled and local expenses paid with a good balance in

the treasury. Would you believe it? There is actually a clear balance of four hundred dollars after all bills are paid! This is a new experience for our treasury. We have not 'raised' any collections; the collections seem to have 'raised' us! Now, I move that out of this balance we increase our pastor's salary two hundred dollars for the year just closing, and that next year's salary be increased four hundred dollars. He has a boy going to college next year and can make good use of it no doubt, and he deserves it. No man ever gave more unstinted service than he."

"Are you all agreed?"

"Yes!" shouts a chorus of voices.

"We miss Deaconess Phoebe to-night," remarks Dr. Middleroad.

"Yes," rejoins Pastor Playfair. "As you know, she went to India six months ago. We thought we could not spare her at all, but she is more alive in 'Old Hickory Street' to-day than while she was among us. Her letters are eagerly heard in the congregation and passed from one to another. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society has more than doubled its contributions in order to support her. Two of our best girls have gone to the Deaconess Training School and another is taking nurse's training. A young school teacher has gone to teach in one of our church schools in the South, supported by the Woman's Home Missionary Society; and two of our young men have begun preparations for the ministry, one being a student volunteer. Deaconess Phoebe is living in all these young lives dedicated to service and in scores of others who are following in her steps as she 'went about doing good' among us."

OCT 23 1913

"What about the great college campaign? With your new building and increased benevolences you have not been able to help there too, have you?"

"I thought at first," replies the treasurer, "that I had done my whole duty in putting up half of the junior annex, but then I considered that in a few years Jimmie would be going away from home, and where? What would all this amount to if he went to a Godless school and had his faith destroyed by unbelieving teachers? We consulted together, and ten of us agreed to put up two hundred apiece in four annual payments. Jimmie will be almost ready for college by the time the last payment is made. This puts five hundred dollars more into our benevolences this year."

"Well, you are in Class A all right," remarks Dr. Middleroad as he sums up the totals; "but that is the smallest thing about the year's victory. We must rechristen 'Old Hickory Street' and call it 'New Hickory Street.' The promise, 'Behold, I will make all things new,' has been indeed fulfilled. We have no 'problems'; our one-time 'burdens' have become wings. We are finishing up our hour of jubilation at half-past eight. After the approval of the minutes Brother Vision will lead us in a few words of thanksgiving to our heavenly Father, and then let us have a half hour of tenpins and basketball with Jimmie and the Juniors. It will do us and them all good for us to be boys again. This evening has made me feel twenty years younger. Would that all the parishes of Methodism might catch the Vision!"

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